



**Testimony of Daniella Arias
Member, Connecticut Prevention Network and
Program Coordinator, The Hub**

In support of

**H.B. No. 5037 An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023
Appropriations Committee, February 24, 2022**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Daniella Arias and I am program coordinator at The Hub and here in my capacity today as a member of the Connecticut Prevention Network (CPN). CPN is the coalition of the five Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations (RBHAO) and other prevention organizations who are focused on substance abuse and mental health prevention efforts.

I am here today to support H.B. No. 5037 An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023.

Connecticut receives more than \$400 million annual through the Master Settlement Agreement and tobacco taxes but the state has not invested any dollars towards tobacco prevention work in more than 5 years. This year, the budget contains \$1 million of one time ARPA funds to go to tobacco prevention. I support the proposed budget, as tobacco is the leading cause of death and disease in the state of Connecticut and state funds being invested in a sustainable and robust way to combat tobacco use is necessary.

The Hub, a division of the Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership (RYASAP), is South Western Connecticut's (Region 1), designated RBHAO. We support and coordinate behavioral health initiatives that include substance misuse. The Hub also provides tobacco and nicotine prevention and treatment resources. We fund and support the work of each local prevention council in Region 1, whose goal this fiscal year is to reduce vaping use rates by 5% by 2025 among 12-18 year olds by targeting related and protective factors. Tobacco control efforts are largely conducted through the local prevention councils, municipal health departments, and school systems, with unequal levels of investment that depend on local community resources and grants.

Cigarette smoking remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control recommends Connecticut spend \$32 million annually on best practice tobacco prevention and cessation programs. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), Connecticut young adults 18-25 continue to have the highest rates of cigarette use of any age group. Evidence shows that young people who use e-cigarettes are more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future. Having state funds invested into sustainable tobacco prevention will contribute to the decrease in use, as well as, support the various prevention efforts being made by different municipalities throughout the state.

I am available to answer any questions and look forward to working with the committee on this issue further.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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